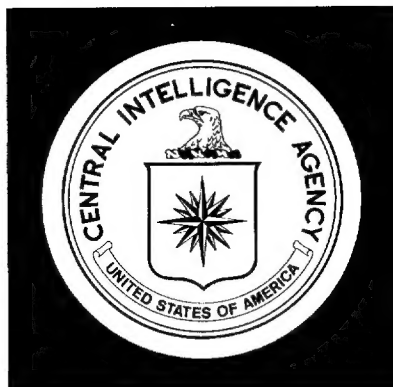


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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum

*Recent Communist Logistical and Manpower
Developments in Indochina*

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ER IM 73-19-4
6 March 1973
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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
6 March 1973

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

RECENT COMMUNIST LOGISTICAL AND MANPOWER
DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA

SUMMARY

1. Communist logistical activity throughout Indochina is continuing at a brisk pace. In southern Laos, large quantities of supplies continue to move on an around-the-clock basis, and traffic flows into the A Shau Valley appear to be on the increase. Significant activity has also continued in the Cambodia/South Vietnam border area, where the first confirmation of 130-mm field guns moving into southern South Vietnam was recently received, and where Communist forces are reportedly establishing base areas from which to conduct post-cease-fire activities. Inside South Vietnam, detected vehicle activity remains at a high level in GVN Military Region (MR) 1, and a recent report indicated that all VC units in one province had been adequately resupplied with men and supplies from North Vietnam by 26 February. Farther south, supplies continue to move into the Central Highlands, the Saigon region, and the Delta.

2. Personnel infiltration continued during the past week, and there are indications that North Vietnam intends to augment or at least maintain unit strengths in South Vietnam. Currently, there are some 30,000 infiltrators traveling south through the pipeline, of which at least 6,000 personnel in both regular and special-purpose groups probably started south after the cease-fire date. During the past week, 11 special-purpose infiltration groups -- with several hundred military and civilian specialists -- were initially detected at Binh Tram 18 in North Vietnam.

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Note: Comments and queries regarding this publication are welcomed. They may be directed to [REDACTED] of the Office of Economic Research, Code 143, Extension 6469.

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3. No redeployments of major Communist units into or out of South Vietnam or Laos were detected during the past week, although one NVA armor battalion - part of the large amount of armor previously noted deploying south - was initially located on 28 February in the South Vietnam/Laos border area of southern GVN MR 1. Several major North Vietnamese units within South Vietnam have been noted recently repositioning and establishing more permanent bases of operations, and there are indications that some units are planning to assign their personnel to local Viet Cong units to minimize the apparent NVA in-country presence. In Laos, some North Vietnamese units may be preparing to return home in the near future.

* * * * *

SPECIAL NOTE

Very late evidence indicates that additional regular infiltration groups have entered the pipeline since the cease-fire in South Vietnam on 28 January. Two groups destined for MR Tri-Thien-Hue, both of which were to be sent out through Binh Tram 18, were initially detected on 5 March. This marks the first time since the cease-fire that regular infiltration groups have been observed in this area, and the addition of these groups raises the number of personnel detected entering the pipeline since 28 January to more than 7,000. This development is not reflected in the textual discussion which follows, but will be treated fully in next week's issuance.

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DISCUSSION

Recent Communist Logistical Developments in Indochina

Logistic Activity in Southern North Vietnam

4. Although the pace of logistic activity in southern North Vietnam as reflected in COMINT remains lower than in the pre-cease-fire period, persistent indications of the movement of supplies in areas from Vinh south to the DMZ reflect an ongoing substantial resupply effort. Recent evidence has revealed that heavy barge activity is continuing in the Vinh area. On 23 February, for example, an element of Binh Tram 18 expressed concern that the unloading of cargo was "too slow," as only 120 tons of cargo were being unloaded daily. That this activity was continuing in early March was reflected in a message of 2 March which revealed that the difficulties stemmed from the fact that only one pier was available for unloading; as a consequence the level of the daily shipments was not expected to rise until at least 10 March. Reportedly, "there is a lot of cargo" to be delivered south by this route.

5. Other intercepted messages during the period made it clear that resupply activity was not confined to the Vinh area. On 27 February, Binh Tram 25 noted that 65 tons of weapons and ammunition had been picked up for movement to Binh Tram 26 near Dong Hoi. The message also referenced some 1,900 tons of supplies (800 tons of ordnance and 1,100 tons of rice) which probably had been delivered south from the entity. The intercept is believed to update an earlier intercepted report on deliveries since 11 February¹ and implies a southward flow of some 75 tons of ordnance daily during the preceding four days. Not all activity in North Vietnam has been directed toward South Vietnam and southern Laos, however. Some deliveries toward northern Laos along Route 7 were noted as recently as of 4 March.

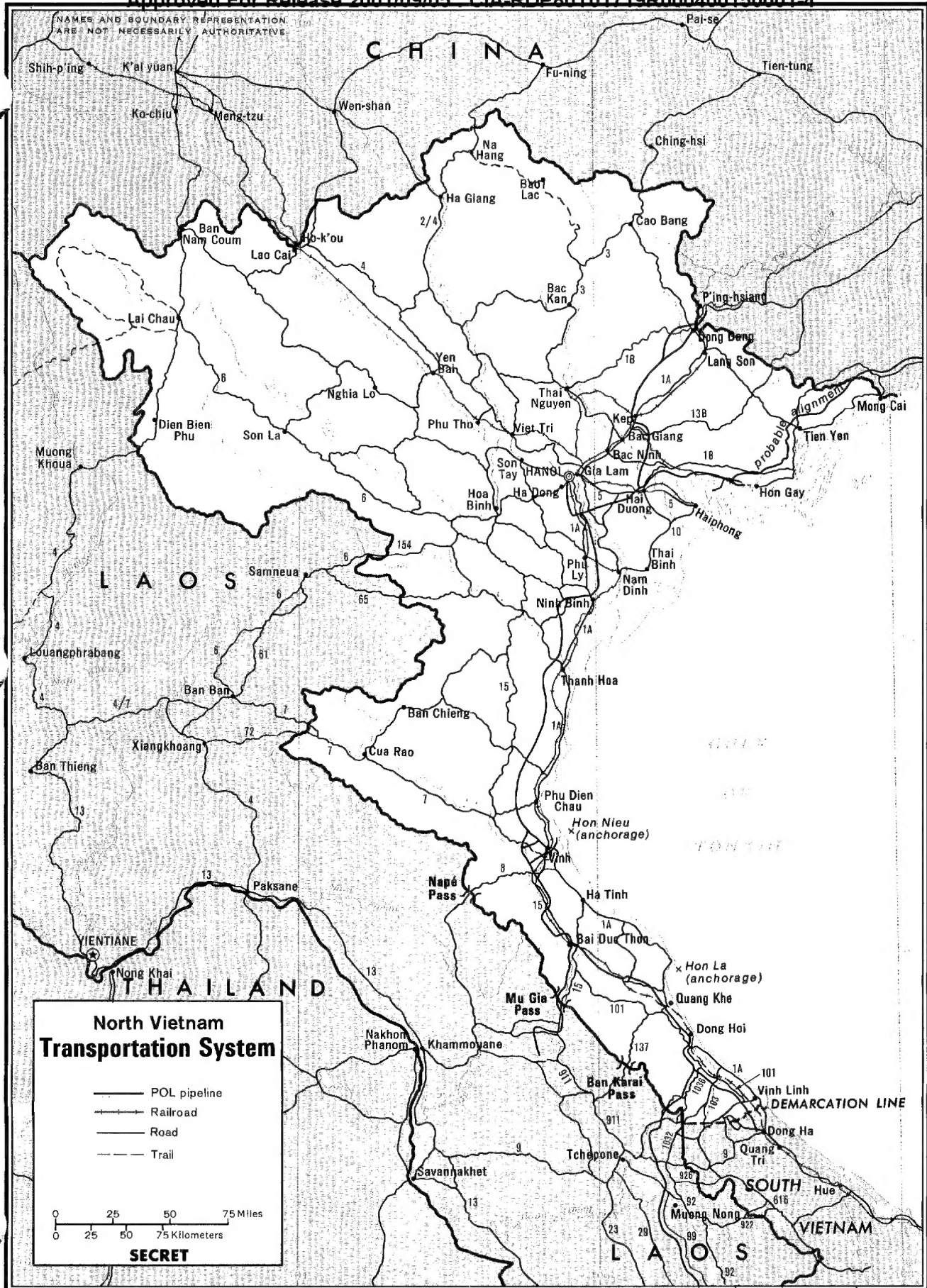
Logistic Activity in Southern Laos and Cambodia

6. While apparently sustaining their "General Transportation Offensive" throughout MR 559, North Vietnamese transportation forces have since the South Vietnam cease-fire increased the pace of logistic activity in southern Laos to a level equal to (and possibly greater than) that of past years. COMINT reflections of logistic activity through the Ban Karai Pass in February, for example, indicated the level of Communist truck traffic

1. See ER IM 73-19-3 of 27 February 1973 (SC No. 06129/73), SECRET SPOKE/NO FOREIGN DISSEM.

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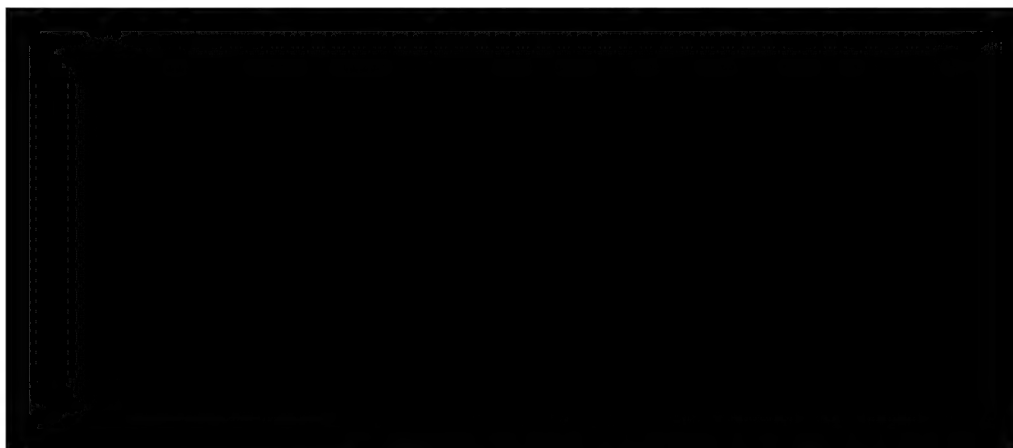
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was at least equal to that of February 1971, when NVA forces were engaged in a "crash" transportation phase just before and during Operation Lam Son 719, the South Vietnamese incursion into southern Laos.

7. During the past week, both sensors and COMINT indicated that the heavy Communist resupply activity noted on the input corridors to southern Laos in February was continuing. The pattern remained the same as in recent weeks -- that is, the heaviest concentration of activity at Ban Karai Pass, a high level continuing on routes west of the DMZ, and a smaller but sustained movement through Mu Gia Pass. Sensor detections, reached their current dry season peak on 28 February. On that day, close to 100 southbound movements were detected on Route 912, just south of Ban Karai Pass. This heavy sensor-detected activity continued during the first week of March. The most recent COMINT reporting of vehicle activity from Binh Tram 14 at Ban Karai came on 26 February and revealed that 112 vehicles from four transportation battalions had entered Laos that day. West of the DMZ, heavy vehicle activity continued to be noted on Route 1033. Sensors reflected a total of more than 85 southbound movements on that route during the period 26 February through 5 March. In addition, light but steady traffic was detected on Route 103 in the western DMZ and on Route 1009 through the eastern half of the DMZ as trucks appear to be moving through that area to South Vietnam.

8. Within southern Laos, roads remain in good condition and are being heavily used. As implied in the North Vietnamese press,² the North Vietnamese are taking advantage of the lack of US air strikes to move supplies both day and night. Various logistic entities acknowledge overflights by aerial observers, but seem to show little concern, so long as the bombers stay away.

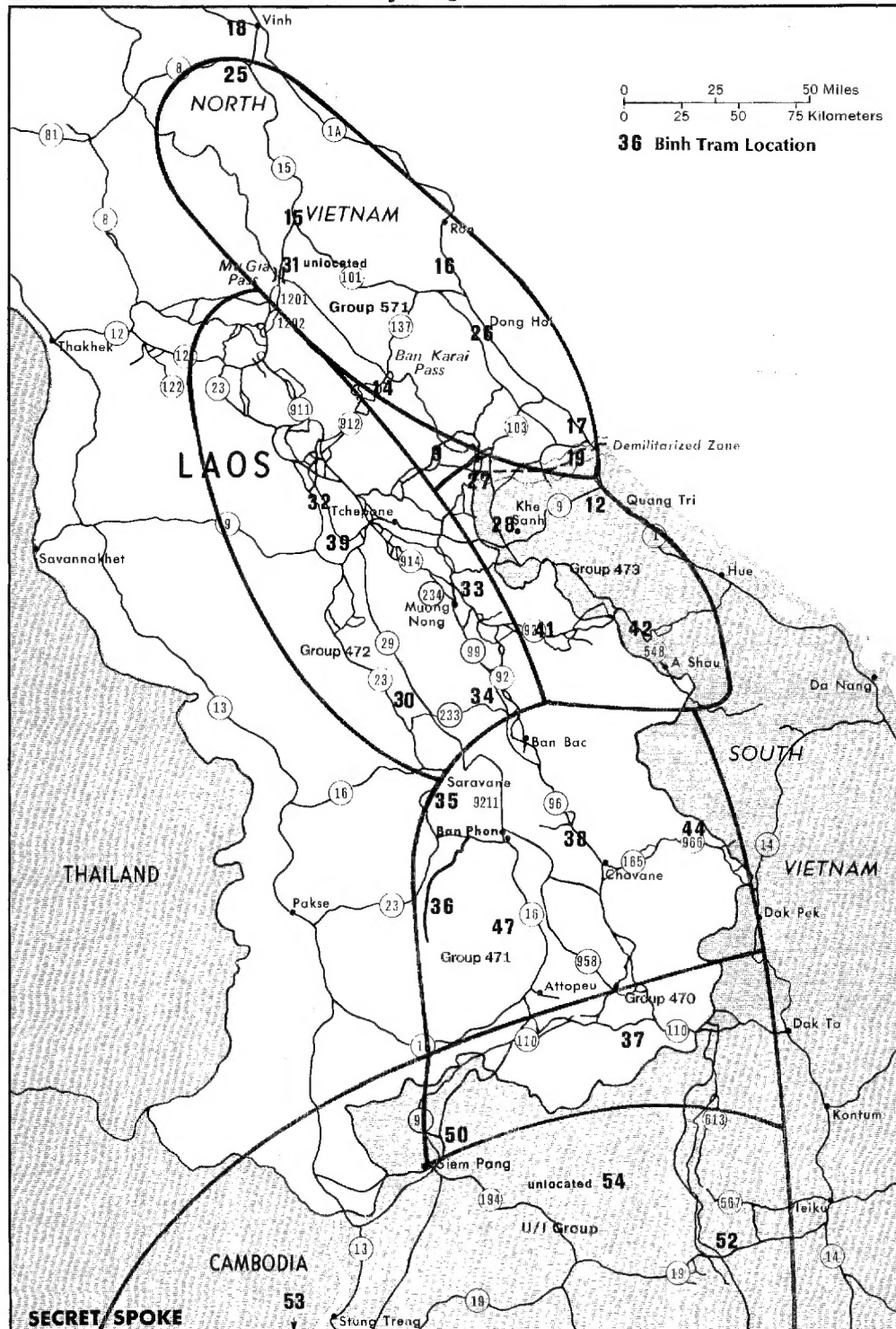


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2. For a brief discussion of recent reporting by the North Vietnamese press on transportation in Indochina, see paragraphs 17 and 18.

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Binh Tram Locations in Military Region 559



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11. Heavy vehicle movement in the southern part of the Laotian Panhandle continues to be noted in COMINT. Recently, Binh Tram 34 near Ban Bac reported sending 16 vehicles south to Group 471. In addition, Group 471 is receiving supplies -- probably foodstuffs and gasoline -- from Group 470 located to its south: on 28 February, for example, 30 vehicles left Binh Tram 37 (in the tri-border) for Group 471. Some of the above activity is in support of tactical forces. Recently, an element of the NVA 29th Regiment (operating around Muong Phalane) disclosed the food and quartermaster items it had received for the month of March, while another, unidentified NVA element requested numerous types of ammunition -- including mortar, small arms, and grenades -- be delivered to it.

12. Other intercepts from the Group 470 area reveal continuing heavy vehicle activity directed toward southern South Vietnam and the Central Highlands. A plan was revealed on 2 March to transfer 285 vehicles to B-2 (a probable reference to southern South Vietnam); whether it had already been implemented is unclear. Two days later, 16 vehicles were reported to be waiting in the tri-border area to go to the B-3 Front.

13. Logistic activity in eastern Cambodia remains substantial as the Communists continue to use the region as a logistical conduit and base for their activities in South Vietnam. Recently received reporting

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indicated that the North Vietnamese were then planning to establish base areas in Cambodia at four locations ringing the border of Cambodia and South Vietnam's MRs 3 and 4 from which to conduct post-cease-fire activities. Bases at Snuol and Krek were to serve VC/NVA units in MR 3, while similar facilities farther south at Kirirong and Kompong Trach would provide support for forces committed in MR 4. Recent Communist tactical activity throughout southeastern Cambodia may reflect enemy designs on gaining greater control and security around the cited base areas.

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Logistic Developments in South Vietnam

14. Significant logistic activity inside South Vietnam was again detected this week as the Communists support the persistent fighting in some areas and build supply reserves in others. According to one source, by 26 February all VC local regiments in Thua Thien Province had been fully resupplied with weapons and personnel from North Vietnam, providing them a strong posture there. Elsewhere in MR 1, aerial photography has shown consistently heavy vehicle traffic on the routes around Khe Sanh: on 1 March, 66 trucks were observed on Route 9 between Khe Sanh and the Laos/South Vietnam border. To the east, intercepted communications revealed that ammunition stockpiles under the care of Binh Tram 12 (headquartered around Quang Tri) are being dispersed. Trucks have also been detected on routes leading south of Khe Sanh along the western South Vietnam border, and tanks and trucks were again detected around the A Shau Valley.

15. In MR 2, elements of the NVA 95B Regiment (10th Division), which operates in the Central Highlands, reported receiving rice and other supplies -- probably including medicine -- from a major North Vietnamese logistical element near the Pleiku/Kontum border area. In the same general area, VC officers recently revealed that the Communists are determined to retain control along Route 14 between Pleiku and Kontum in order to maintain a resupply capability there.

16. During February, Communist units in Binh Duong Province, GVN MR 3, stockpiled large quantities of supplies, reportedly bringing stockpiles to a level adequate to meet six months' resupply requirements for the Communist troops there. Only some medicines reportedly are in short supply. Most of the supplies -- mainly food -- were purchased in Saigon by legally licensed South Vietnamese traders and then trucked to the province. In addition, however, some military supplies have been infiltrated from Cambodia since the cease-fire, either via the Saigon River or south through Phuoc Long Province. The presence of at least a dozen new, apparently logistics-related, structures in Binh Duong along the Saigon River is further evidence of continuing supply activity there. Farther north, rallier reports revealed that 12 130-mm field guns were being towed from Snuol, Cambodia, to Loc Ninh, South Vietnam. This is the first report that the Communists have introduced the long-range 130-mm field guns into the southern half of South Vietnam. Finally, in the Delta, elements of the NVA 1st Division now in Chau Doc Province were reported being resupplied from Cambodia during the first half of February.

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The North Vietnamese Press Reports on Recent Military Transportation Activities

17. A recently available 11 February editorial in the North Vietnamese Army newspaper, *Quang Doi Nhan Dan*, entitled "The New Impetus on the Military Communications and Transportation Front" recounted the "new, outstanding achievements" currently being made by NVA transportation elements. According to the editorial, logistical elements -- probably subordinate to the General Directorate of Rear Services, Hanoi's organization for shipping war materiel -- are taking advantage of the "now more advantageous conditions" (presumably the US bombing halt in North Vietnam and Laos) and are working hard to meet the "higher" transportation requirements now being impressed on them. Transportation norms are being more than fulfilled, and vehicle drivers are surpassing prescribed mileage requirements and increasing their number of vehicle trips to the front lines.

18. The editorial praised two NVA transportation battalions that had been honored as "hero units" by the National Assembly. The 743rd Battalion is responsible for the movement of supplies along Route 7 to northern Laos and the 101st Battalion for moving supplies from southern Laos toward southern South Vietnam. Both units were very active in supply activity in those areas in early February. The North Vietnamese have often been noted in COMINT honoring logistical units which have performed well, both to acknowledge that fact and, more importantly, to heighten other units' competitiveness and inspire them to emulate those praised. The implication is that high levels of proficiency in logistical efforts are still being demanded.

Recent Communist Manpower Developments in Indochina

Personnel Infiltration

19. During the past week, 15 special-purpose infiltration groups were initially detected

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20. Currently, there are some 30,000 infiltrators traveling southward through the pipeline. At least 6,000 of these personnel in both regular and special-purpose groups probably started south after the cease-fire date. The Appendix analyses personnel infiltration during the post-cease-fire period and for the 1972-73 dry season to date.

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VC/NVA Redeployments in South Vietnam

21. No redeployments of major Communist units into or out of South Vietnam were detected during the past week. The 3rd Battalion of the 203rd Armor Regiment, however, was initially located on 28 February in the South Vietnam/Laos border area of southern GVN MR 1. Its arrival in-country appears to have been relatively recent. The battalion clearly was part of the large amount of armor noted deploying south in the infiltration system since late October 1972. It appears to be going to VC MR 5 and may be used to reinforce the 2nd NVA Division in Quang Ngai Province in southern GVN MR 1.

22. Recent COMINT reveals that a North Vietnamese radar company of the 290th Reconnaissance Regiment previously believed to have deployed from southern Laos into the Khe Sanh area in mid-February was delayed because of difficulties in locating an acceptable new position. Under the new schedule, the company was to begin moving into its new area of operations near the Khe Sanh airfield on 1 March.

23. Recently, several North Vietnamese units within South Vietnam were observed repositioning and apparently assuming a standdown posture -- possibly to refit and establish more permanent bases of operations. For example, between 18 and 25 February, the headquarters of the 64th Regiment, 320th NVA Division, in GVN MR 2 relocated 21 kilometers southeast to a position near Thanh An where its subordinate battalions were being assigned permanent billeting sites. Similarly, the 7th NVA Division in GVN MR 3 is now apparently refitting some of its subordinate units which were engaged in heavy fighting in Binh Duong Province just prior to the cease-fire. Also, the 141st Regiment of 7th Division is preparing more permanent quarters for its personnel. New billets probably are being hurried to completion prior to the arrival of the cease-fire control teams. Finally, a number of North Vietnamese antiaircraft regiments in Quang Tri Province have initiated extensive training and appear to be establishing permanent bases of operations.

24. In the northern Delta the Communists are still planning to parcel out North Vietnamese personnel in main force units among local Viet Cong units, reportedly to circumvent accusations that NVA troops are active in the area. The 5th and 6th NVA Infantry Divisions, for example, are still scheduled to be dissolved as divisional entities, and there is new evidence that at least one old line Viet Cong Delta regiment -- the Dong Thap 2, which was disbanded in 1971 -- will be reconstituted to accommodate some of the North Vietnamese personnel. Similarly, about 3,000 North Vietnamese troops reportedly have been assigned to local units in Thua Thien Province where they may attempt to pass as Viet Cong.

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Developments in Laos and Cambodia

25. No major redeployments of Communist units were detected in Laos during the past week, although there were tentative indications that some North Vietnamese units may be preparing to return home in the near future. The first such indication in north Laos occurred on 28 February, when a company of the 42nd NVA Artillery Battalion was ordered to turn over its artillery weapons to the Pathet Lao prior to moving back to North Vietnam. The 42nd Battalion has operated recently in the Sala Phou Khoun area, assisting Pathet Lao and Deuane Neutralist units there.

26. In southern Laos, a message of 26 February from the 29th NVA Infantry Regiment in the Muong Phalane area indicated that the unit may deploy to North Vietnam in the near future. An associate of the regiment's 1st Battalion was queried on its state of readiness and on the availability of trucks prior to its return to North Vietnam. No date has yet been set to start the move. Should the entire 29th Regiment redeploy to North Vietnam, it would represent a change in Hanoi's previous tasking for the unit. According to a collateral source, personnel of the 29th Regiment were to be dispersed among other Communist units so that they could remain in Laos and escape the detection of a supervisory commission.

27. Two major changes in the North Vietnamese logistic structure in southern Laos were noted last week. Binh Tram 31 -- whose area of operations is believed to have been near the Mu Gia Pass on the Laotian side of the border -- has been recently resubordinated to Group 571, which is the responsible entity for rear services operations in Quang Binh Province, North Vietnam. Farther south, Binh Tram 33, which operates in the Muong Nong area, may no longer be serving as a full-fledged Bing Tram.³ All of its formerly known organic units have recently been resubordinated to other commands, and Binh Tram 33 has curtailed its communications. Another major logistical element in the central Panhandle -- Binh Tram 30 -- has assumed some responsibilities formerly held by Binh Tram 33 along Route 99.

28. In Cambodia, two Khmer Communist (KC) units which recently deployed into the Banam area of Prey Veng Province have been identified as the 126th and 173rd Infantry Regiments. The identification of these two regiments brings the known number of KC regiments to five. In the past, the KC have generally been organized into units of battalion size or smaller; however, it now appears that, with their break from VC/NVA units, they are consolidating into larger units.

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APPENDIX

1972-73 DRY SEASON INFILTRATION

Thus far, the implementation of a cease-fire in South Vietnam apparently has had little overall impact on infiltration activity. Since 1 September, about 79,000 infiltrators are estimated to have entered the pipeline, compared with 81,000 for the same period during the 1971-72 dry season. Of the current dry season's total, more than 23,000 have entered the infiltration system since 1 January, representing little change for this time of the year compared with previous dry seasons. Some 14,000 of these infiltrators have been initially detected (or gap-filled) since 28 January. Although a number of the groups detected since the cease-fire were noted in the Laotian Panhandle, the location of a significant portion of them at Binh Tram 18 in the Vinh area and at Binh Tram 14 at Ban Karai Pass in February indicates that Hanoi has continued to insert personnel into the pipeline during the period immediately prior to and following the cease-fire.

The number of personnel detected moving south in infiltration groups thus far during the current dry season is compared with those during the previous dry season in the following tabulation.

<i>Destination</i>	<i>1 Sep 72 - 28 Feb 73</i>	<i>1 Sep 71 - 28 Feb 72</i>
Total	79,000	81,000
MR Tri-Thien-Hue	20,500	11,000
MR 5	9,000	15,500
B-3 Front	12,500	19,500
COSVN	26,000	28,000
Southern Laos/MR 559	11,000	7,000

Most additions that have been made since 28 January are destined for the COSVN area (GVN MRs 3 and 4 and Cambodia) -- more than 11,000 men. This influx of personnel increases the total traveling to COSVN since 1 September to 26,000, a number approximating the 28,000 that were deployed there during the same period last year. More personnel have now been sent to COSVN this dry season than to any other area, apparently indicating Hanoi's intention to rebuild its depleted main force structure in southern South Vietnam.

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This year's pattern of destinations in other areas, however, differs significantly from that of the September to February period of the 1971-72 dry season. The number of personnel sent to MR Tri-Thien-Hue during the present dry season, for example, is nearly twice as great as during the comparable period last year. While most of the groups destined for MR Tri-Thien-Hue this year were detected or gap-filled during the first four months of the dry season, several groups appeared in COMINT during the latter part of February, indicating that Hanoi has resumed the flow of manpower to northern GVN MR 1. Although we estimate that Hanoi has replaced most of the losses suffered in northern MR 1 during the 1972 Spring Offensive, it is possible that significant infiltration to MR Tri-Thien-Hue will continue, perhaps in expectation of renewed military activity there at some future date.

The number of personnel who have been sent to the central portions of South Vietnam - Communist MR 5 and the B-3 Front - is significantly less than during the first six months of the 1971-72 dry season - 21,500 this year versus 35,000 last year. In both these areas, the Communists apparently have not replaced all their losses suffered during the 1972 offensive. The recent detection of a number of groups traveling to MR 5, however, suggests that the North Vietnamese are continuing to send personnel there and may continue to do so during the remaining months of this dry season.

Few infiltration groups traveling to southern Laos/MR 559 have been noted in 1973. According to both COMINT and collateral sources, many of the personnel that were sent to southern Laos in late 1972 have been used to staff new NVA combat units as well as to bolster the logistics system of MR 559. As a result, the Communist combat and administrative services structures in southern Laos have been strengthened considerably. This increase in strength, coupled with the implementation of a cease-fire in Laos, may result in a nominal infiltration flow to southern Laos in the next several months.

Thus far in the dry season, a total of 215 special-purpose [REDACTED] groups -- with a total [REDACTED] strength of about 4,600 -- have been detected in COMINT. Most of these personnel probably are earmarked for MR Tri-Thien-Hue and southern Laos/MR 559. The greatest number (55) of special-purpose groups was detected in November, when the North Vietnamese increased their efforts to send military and civilian specialists to the south.

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Post-Cease-fire Infiltration

The first indication that Hanoi was continuing its infiltration to the south after the cease-fire date occurred with the initial detection of 15 special-purpose groups at Binh Tram 18 (Vinh) on 18 February. These groups, with a total strength of more than 800, were to depart for various areas of South Vietnam by 25 February. Subsequently, on 26 February another message originating from Binh Tram 18 revealed that 11 more new special-purpose groups were to be sent out by 3 March.

Thus far, no regular infiltration groups have been detected starting south from Binh Tram 18 since the cease-fire, but the initial detection of a number of them at Binh Tram 14 in the Ban Karai Pass area since 28 January suggests that Hanoi also has continued the flow of regular infantry troops on a significant scale since the cease-fire. At least nine of these detected regular groups – with a total strength of 4,500 – probably left North Vietnam after 28 January, bringing total post-cess-fire infiltration starts to at least 6,000 infiltrators. Several thousand other infantry troops probably also started the journey south in as yet undetected groups. As in the case for groups detected after 28 January, the majority of those groups which are suspected to have entered the pipeline since then are destined for the COSVN area. If these personnel are traveling south on foot, the first groups would not begin to arrive until at least early May. There are a number of indications, however, that some of the groups which probably left North Vietnam after 28 January are being transported by truck. If so, the recently detected groups could arrive at their designated areas in a month or so.

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